



SOCIETY and PERSONAL ACTIVITIES of WOMEN



Revelations of A Wife

ADELL GARRISON

If there were a cobwebby, dirty corner of the old Dacey farmhouse which my doughty mother-in-law did not inspect minutely and make me share in the scrutiny I do not remember it. No detail, good or bad, of the structure escaped her, and she might have been a prospective purchaser instead of merely whiling away the time until the repair of the car should be accomplished, or rather the pretense of repair with which we were keeping her on the place we wished to buy.

Dicky strode in as she was peering into a door besides one of the old fireplaces.

"Look out, mother, you may find a Bluebeard victim or a case of hooch," he called gayly.

She paid no attention to him until she had scrutinized the interior of the dusky cavity thoroughly. Then she straightened herself and spoke excitedly.

"It's an old warming oven. Just think of it."

Dicky flashed an amused glance at me. We are used to Mother Graham's reverence for ancient things, and her irreverent son declares that she says her prayer to George Washington's portrait every night.

"I imagine there are more old scraps than that in the place," Dicky said judiciously. "Looks in this kitchen out here as if they had built up an immense old fireplace. Come on, let's take a scout at it."

"Why have you left the car?" his mother demanded disconcertingly.

A Haughty Exit.

"Oh, it's all right!" he rejoined. "Fortunately, Mads was driving on the extreme right side of the road when it gave up the ghost, so it isn't anybody's way, and I've sent a message for the garage man with instructions to look like the devil when he gets here. Thus I'll have a chance to explore this, too. I have a pretty taste in antiques myself. I was always afraid I'd marry one—probably would if Mads hadn't seen me first and grabbed me."

His mother had stiffened at his expletive and did not relax her attitude during the rest of his chatter. When he had finished she faced him sternly.

"Richard!" Her voice would have congealed an icicle to lower degrees of cold. "Why Margaret permits your profanity and vulgarity of speech I cannot fathom. But please remember that I am your mother, and never let me hear such language from you again."

She swept out of the door into the next room, her head held disdainfully high. As is her wont when angered or annoyed at Dicky, she had managed to convey the idea that his ideas and ideals had been palpably lowered since his marriage to me, and that I was the cause of his deterioration.

Dicky grinned ruefully at her retreating back.

"Rent it? No!"

"You Pernicious Influence!" he murmured to me with mock reproach, tweaking my ear in passing to follow his mother into the next room. And, of course, with the assurance that my husband was on my side instead of his mother's in the age-old contest, I promptly forgot all rancor toward her; indeed, I obliterated the little sting from my memory.

We found her standing in the doorway between the big, old-fashioned, double parlors—the second visit she had paid the spot—gazing speculatively at the carved woodwork.

"If this were thrown into one big room," she said, as if to herself.

I caught up eagerly.

"Wouldn't it make a wonderful living room?" I exclaimed.

She gave me a stare that made me uncomfortable by something elusive in it which I could not understand.

"I thought you said there was nothing for sale or rent in the place," she said incisively. "What was the matter with this? Too much trouble to fix it up?"

"Why? I—I—" my voice was nothing but an embarrassed stammer. Dicky came to my rescue dashingly.

"Mads never thought you would consider it for a moment, mother," he said. "Besides I don't believe anybody knew it was for sale before Mrs. Ticer spoke of it. Do you really mean you think we'd better try to rent it?"

"Rent it? No!" his mother snapped. "You'd have to spend the money to fix it up, anyway, and it's a valuable investment. Everybody who

ought to have a small farm in the background."

"And you approve of our buying it?" Dicky asked incredulously.

"Yes, decidedly, but not of the method you two have taken to make me approve," his mother returned, with sternness in her face, but the glint of an ironical smile in her eyes. "Now, Margaret, if you'll go out and start that car you'll perhaps be in time to go down and sign the papers which are waiting for you."

I do not think there could be found in the world two more astonished persons than were Dicky and I when his mother showed by her caustic little remark concerning the car and the papers in the attorney's office that she was fully aware of the affectionate trick we had tried to play upon her.

We were too flabbergasted—to use one of the pets of my husband's vocabulary—to do more for several seconds than stare open-mouthed at her. If she had produced a hickory switch and had proceeded to use it I think neither of us would have been surprised or would have resented the action. I had the sensation of a school child caught in a lie, and I think Dicky felt exactly as I did.

He was the first to recover his nerves or his nerve—I think he had lost both during the brief seconds of his mother's effective little speech.

"Why, mother!" he exclaimed with a praiseworthy effort to save our sinking bark. "What do you mean? I—I don't understand."

"Oh, yes you do!" his mother retorted. "And so does Margaret. So you needn't stand there like a gander on one foot and try to pull any wool over my eyes, for you can't do it."

Dicky threw me an imploring glance, but I prudently kept silent, leaving him to get out of the embarrassing situation as best he could.

My mother-in-law, I could see, was in high feather at being able to disconcert us so thoroughly. In fact, her success had made her almost good-humored. But I knew that she would have to be handled with gloves, and that she would resent an ill-advised word from me far more quickly than she would from her idolized son. So I turned my eyes away from my husband's ludicrously pleading ones.

"That Remains My Secret."

With commendable alacrity he changed tactics, raising his hands above his head as if a movie sheriff's automatic were pointed at him. "Don't shoot!" he implored, pathetically. "I'll come down, sign a sworn confession to everything, and the blessing you with my last breath if you'll only tell me how you found out."

His mother permitted herself a grim smile.

"That remains my secret," she said. "I'll give you a word of caution, however. The walls in the house are thin, and the people who live there are garrulous when among themselves."

She had heard the Ticers commenting among themselves upon the queerness of our pretending not to have bought the Dacey farm when the papers were already awaiting signature.

I cast a furtive, frightened glance at Dicky. Mrs. Ticer, I knew, was not particularly charmed by my mother-in-law's rigid and haughty demeanor. I could imagine that her comments upon the elder woman might have been exceedingly caustic. By all rules, then, Dicky's mother should have been furiously angry and ready to balk our scheme in any way. But instead, she was actually good-natured. What was the answer?

I put the problem away for later consideration. Indeed, I had no time to ponder it, for Mother Graham was speaking again, and Dicky and I paid attention like two well-beaten retrievers.

"But that's neither here nor there, now," she said briskly. "We've got something else to think of. This house has to be fumigated and painted and papered before a slick of furniture goes in it. And where are you going to put the furniture while you are doing it?"

"We thought of the barn," I ventured meekly.

"Sometimes you have a streak of common sense, Margaret," she retorted in so cold a tone that I did not know whether her words were

ironical or complimentary. "Show it to me."

We deferentially escorted her to the barn, and she regarded it critically.

"Beats all how these foreigners treat their cattle so much better than their families," she commented. "They've almost ruined that fine old house, but the barn isn't in bad shape at all. When it's swept out it will do very well to store the furni-

ture—that is, if it is protected against dust and cobwebs."

"Katie and Jim packed everything very thoroughly," I said.

"I only hope you have a whole dish left if that ape had anything to do with it," my mother-in-law retorted, with the rancorous little expression she always reserves for Katie, although I long ago guessed it to be only a habit with her. But I made no defence of my faithful

little maid. If ever there were a time when silence was golden, I decided, this was it.

She stood still for a minute or two, her eyes roving over the capacious barn, and I knew that her capable brain was already planning the moving campaign. Finally she struck her hands together and began issuing orders in Galling-gun fashion.

"When you go down to sign those

papers," she said, "wire for the furniture. And send that worthless Ticer and his son over here to sweep out this barn. Then bring out a painter and a carpenter with you. I shall stay here and plan out things while you're gone."

SHOULDN'T OFFER EITHER.

An amusing controversy is raging at present in Paris. When walking with a woman should a man offer

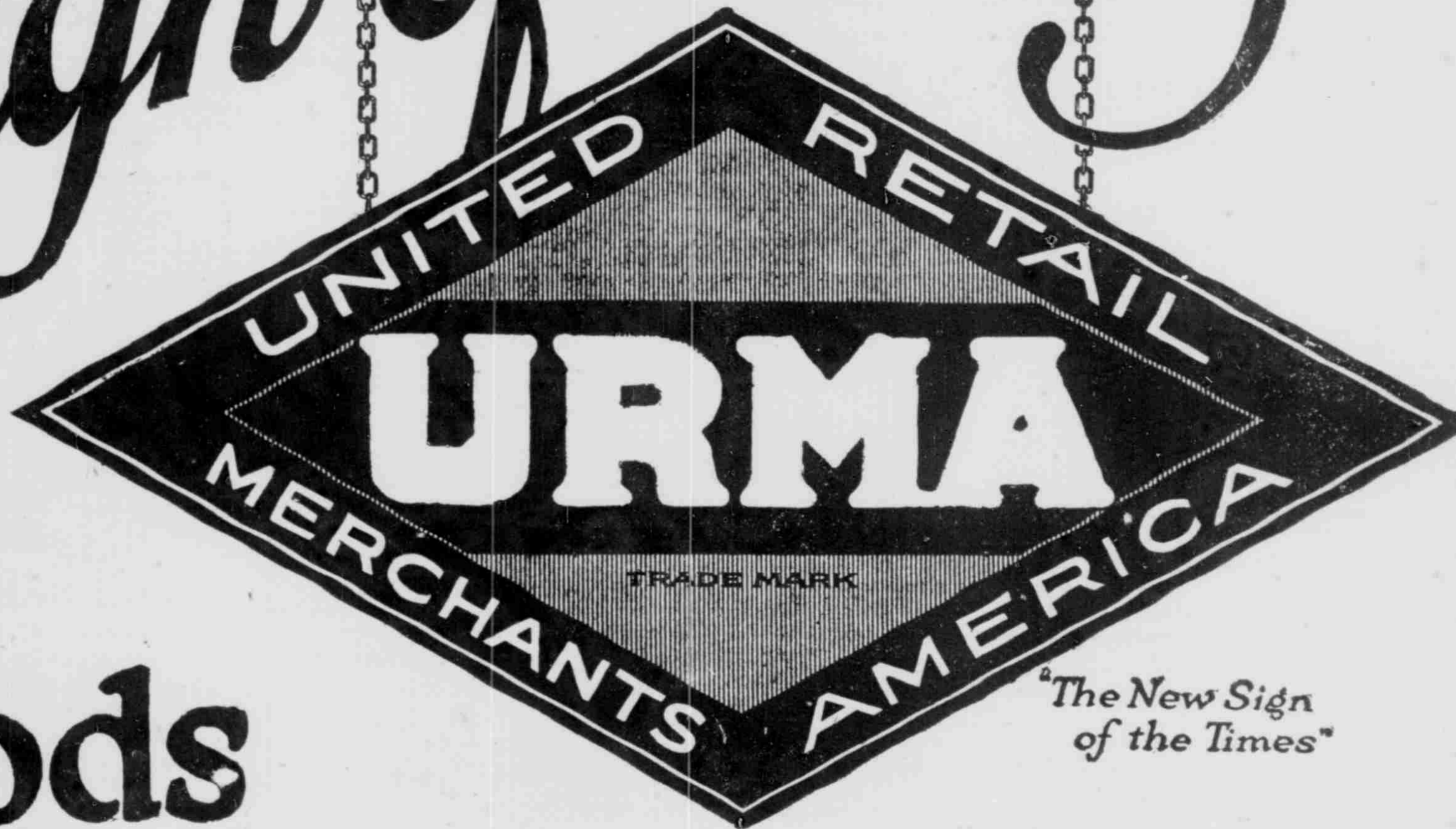
her his right arm or his left? French women contend that a man should offer his left arm so that his fair consort may have the hand free with which she holds her handbag and parcels.

Asked for his advice on the question, M. Andre' de Fouquieres, a leader of Paris masculine fashion, explained that a man should not offer his arm at all to a lady when in the street except in a crowd or

under exceptional circumstances, such as if a lady were feeling indisposed. But when taking a lady in to dinner, or under similar circumstances indoors, a man, he explained, should offer his right arm, in accordance with a custom which has survived since the days when men wore swords.—Kansas City Star.

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If Your House Leaks Air, You're Wasting Coal

WASHINGTON, Dec. 10.—If your doors and windows leak air, you're wasting coal. And you can't afford to do that this winter, for experts say a coal famine is likely to come.

So start now to close up the cracks.

Applying wood and felt weather stripping is one good method, says the United States Department of Agriculture. Put this stripping on the outside at the opening between window sash and frame.

Apply it so closely that more than ordinary effort is required to move the window sash and that the door must be pushed hard to lock it.

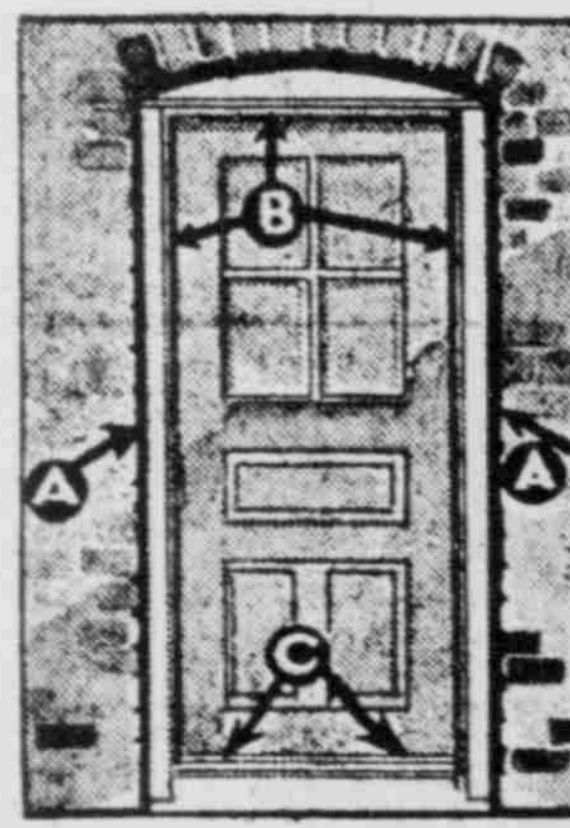
Wood and felt stripping also should be used between the frame and wall where the wall line is not too irregular to close cracks completely.

Stripping may be attached to the outside of doors opening inward. Drafts under doors can be stopped in this way.

Look It Over.

Look at your stripping frequently. It won't stay in good condition long because sliding sashes and continual opening and closing of doors take out its stiffness. As soon as stripping fails to close cracks completely, remove it and apply fresh stripping.

Metal weather stripping is another efficient means of reducing crack leakage and making your house weather tight. You can buy this in any size and put it on yourself.



CLOSING AIR LEAKS TO SAVE COAL. (A) SHOWS FELT TACKED IN PLACE; (B) SHOWS WOOD FELT NAILED TO FRAME; (C) SHOWS BLOCK OF WOOD COVERED ON BOTH SIDES WITH FELT TO LEAVE NO CRACK UNDER DOOR.

Uninsulated floors will cause waste of heat and perhaps add to your doctor bills. It you've no cellar put a coat of plaster between the rough and finished flooring. Heavy paper between floors is another cheap way of insulating.